

*From the Author*  
*8135.6.22*

# CHRISTIAN POLITICS;

OR,

THE ORIGIN OF POWER,

AND

THE GROUNDS OF SUBORDINATION.

## A SERMON,

PREACHED in the Parish Church of ALL SAINTS,  
NORTHAMPTON, on Sunday, September 2, 1792.

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“ Our lot is fallen in an age, when convulsions are agitating the nations around us ; when the minds of men  
“ are fluctuating in suspense ; when loose notions of religion, government and subordination, are propagating  
“ without restraint.” DR. VINCENT’S SERMON.

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VIEW.

THE CHARACTER OF THE LATE MR. JOHN  
HENDERSON.

THE ORIGIN AND IMPORTANCE OF LIFE.



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PHIL. iv. 5.

*Let your moderation be known unto all men.*

CHRISTIAN moderation is a great duty, and at the same time a great blessing. It teaches us to *use this world*, as not *abusing* it; to pass through things temporal, with our eyes fixed, with our hearts preparing for things eternal.

This world is in a disordered fallen state, and as such it is not our *rest*. It is a road, where we travel for a day; it is an inn, where we bait for a night; or rather it is an hospital where we are cured of our corruptions, or a prison where we are punished for our faults. On this view of the subject we see the necessity and excellency of letting our moderation be known unto men; shewing that we are strangers and pilgrims below; that our hopes and happiness are not limited to the land of mortality, to the objects of time and sense, in which case we shall be patient under pain, and resigned under affliction. We shall not be dejected by poverty, nor elated by prosperity; we shall not be intoxicated by flattery, nor wounded by unjust censure. We shall be enabled by a moderation of mind and sobriety of temper, to advance the happiness of others, while we keep our own minds in peace.

If our expectations below are not great, we shall not be greatly disappointed. But supposing that we should be as great and as rich as we should desire, we should find that power only excited opposition, that our danger would increase with our eminence; that our wants multiply with our wealth, or that our riches made themselves wings and flew away. We should experience what ten thousand have experienced before, that we might be rich and great, and yet not be happy.

We should not expect too much from men, particularly in our domestic concerns we should make every kind allowance for difference of tempers and difference of education. We should bear with the impetuosity of youth, the peevishness of sickness, or the infirmities of old age.

Let us now examine how this principle of *moderation* will affect us in our *civil* capacities as *subjects*. You must see the particular necessity for this discussion. The pulpit in general is not the place for *politics*; but *politics* may be so intimately connected with our characters as men, our stations as subjects, our duties as Christians; that it would be improper to omit the discussion, especially when the peculiar temper of the times; the efforts of too many; and the wonderful events in a neighbouring nation must naturally claim our attention.

The interesting question to us is this, How ought a *plain* and *simple christian* to conduct himself?

That we may fairly and fully answer the ques-



sition, that we may set things in their true light ; let us go to the first principles of order, law and government. Whence then is power derived ? What ground of authority have our governors over us ? Now it does *not originate from the people* ; they never relinquished any of their natural rights ; they never made any compacts with their governors : and therefore can have no right to turn them off when they may happen to displease them.

Men are not naturally *equal*, nor have they *equal* rights, but they *equally* have rights ; no two men are equal either *morally, intellectually* or *politically*.

*Power belongeth to GOD* ; and all power and authority come from *GOD*. They are given and entrusted by Him, for the general good of His creatures. Power can no more originate from the people, than the soul can originate from the body : or that heaven can originate from earth ; the higher produces the lower ; the greater produces the less ; and not the inverse of it.

If in this island, or in the whole world, there was but one large family, the father, mother and numerous offspring, can we suppose the modern extravagance ever to have entered into their heads, that they were to choose their own governor ; that these ever were called together, to declare that they were all *naturally equal*, and to appoint who should rule over them. If all the children of Adam had been Cains, we can scarce suppose them guilty of this extravagance ; and yet this supposition is the ground of all republican notions. All governments are founded

in our wants ; hence we see that a parent has a natural right over a child ; for the child has many wants to be supplied, many dangers to be guarded against, many things to learn. It *naturally* looks up to it's parents, and it delights to do so, for the power of the father when properly exerted is the source of it's comfort, the strength of it's weakness, the instructor of it's ignorance, and the reward of all it's innocent exertions to please him. Should one of our modern philosophers endeavour to instruct this child in his new notions of the *natural rights of men* ; that he was in all things equal to his father ; that all the authority of the father was a vile usurpation over his liberty ; the child would feel the absurdity and smile at the folly of such arguments.

This perfect equality of mankind may impose on the shallow minds of some, or flatter the vain spirits of others ; but let us really consider what it is, and what degree of happiness it can produce. It can only be *supposed* to have existed in the very infancy of society ; where each performed every office for himself, and thus all their attention was bestowed on the precarious subsistence of the bodily life. Where all men were equally rich, because all were poor : where all were equally accommodated, because all slept on the ground : where knowledge was not monopolized by a few, for all were equally ignorant ; where none possessed inclosures rich with cultivation, because all lived by rapine ; where the elegancies of life were unknown and the absolute necessaries precarious. Where none were governors, because none would be go-

verned. Where the sick, the aged, and the infirm, were neglected or forsaken in that wandering life, where no one could regard others because all his attention was engrossed by himself. Where personal power, the only species of power, was opposed by artificial : and personal property, the only species of property, was wrested by robbery. Where, in short, every one was independent and every one was miserable. Where they lived the lives of savages, of foxes, and wolves, rather than the lives of rational beings.\*

Yet even here we shall not find the boasted natural equality of mankind : for he who is strong can seize more than he who is weak—He who is swift can hunt more than he who is slow. The one then may riot in excess, whilst the other pines in want.

Yet this is a state which modern philosophers have commended—these are principles, which modern politicians advance. As if the happiness of man was to be promoted by overturning all government, despising all religion, invading all rights, committing every depredation, abolishing all order, insulting all humanity, and then calling this a glorious revolution. The *natural rights of men* reduced to practice.

Men are not born equal as to their *intellectual* powers, or their *outward* circumstances ; for suppose two parents ; the one is industrious and sober, he gets a comfortable fortune to leave his child ; the other is idle and extravagant, and

\* See Monthly Review, vol. iv. p. 215, 216.

his child is brought up in poverty and want : the one has a natural right to enjoy the fruits of his father's labour, as the other must naturally suffer for his father's misconduct.

There have been different governments in the world according with the state of mankind. It does not appear that men fell at once from their original perfection but by successive degrees, answering to the golden, the silver, the brazen, and the iron ages : in conformity to these have been the *patriarchal*, the *regal*, and the *republican* form.

The *patriarchal* was by far the purest and the best ; where every father was king and priest in his own family ; where every one did what was right, therefore they required no outward laws, no ensigns of authority, because all acted from principles of love. Where the father reigned in the mild majesty of mercy ; where his only delight was in doing good ; in making others happy. Then there were no prisons, no punishments, because no crimes. Every family was then a miniature of heaven ; where the Lord Jesus Christ is the kind father of all ; where He reigns, not so much in the right of power, as in the affection of love ; where He is not so much feared for His greatness as loved for His goodness.

But in process of time, men degraded ; they lost their innocence, wisdom, and integrity ; they admitted bad passions, coveted the possessions of others, and were inflamed with the lust of domination ; then other forms of government, and other force were requisite. The



patriarchal necessarily gave place to the *kingly* form. Laws must be published; prisons erected, and punishments inflicted. The war between virtue and vice; between good and evil, became more open; and the arm of authority was invested to protect the good, and to punish the wicked; to preserve peace, to enforce subordination; if not by the love of justice, yet by the fear of punishment; if not by a regard to God, yet, by dreading the vengeance of men; if not by a wish to improve life, at least by an endeavour to escape death.

The lowest and worst of all forms is the *republican*. In which passion and pride produce a strange and incoherent mixture. Where all are willing to govern, and none to be governed; where are all the evils of tyranny, without the responsibility of greatness or the refuge of goodness. Where are many ready to oppress and insult, but none is invested with power and the prerogative of mercy. Where the people are deluded with the name of liberty, whilst they groan under the severest tyranny of licentiousness and are insulted by the lowest of the people.

Where there is power to do mischief, but no power to protect the weak, to defend the worthy, or to punish prosperous iniquity. Such governments are conducted by faction instead of law; by disorder instead of wisdom; by violence instead of justice; by suspicion and fear instead of confidence and unanimity; by vain boasting instead of energy and power. Such are represented by the *iron* and *miry clay* in Nebuchadnezzar's vision; heterogenous principles

which can never mix together; which increase the bulk without adding to the strength. *When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice*; for then every one is safe and secure; every one eats the labour of his own hands, and has nothing to fear, because he has done nothing amiss; *but when the wicked bear rule, when the lowest of the people are exalted into high places, when they declare war against all order, all authority and subordination; then the people mourn, and they have great cause of mourning; for the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel: it is a sport to them to do evil: to insult an imprisoned monarch; to banish a degraded nobility; to plunder a conscientious clergy; to overturn all order; to wreck their wretched vengeance on the innocent, the worthy, and the wise; suddenly to seize their devoted prey; to give him no time to make his defence, to prepare for his latter end, and to sue for royal mercy; mercy which is no longer to be exercised; and with infernal cruelty and savage joy to insult the miserable sufferer in the last agonies of a violent death.*

Practical atheism is the greatest evil that ever desolated the earth, and destroyed mankind.

*Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee; when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled, and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously they shall deal treacherously with thee. Her destruction is come suddenly upon her, in an instant; she hath none to lead her of all the sons she hath brought forth. For*

*the iniquity of a nation many are the rulers of it.*

Where was ever more slavery, oppression and cruelty than in the famous republic of Rome?  
 “ A people who while they were poor, robbed  
 “ mankind, and as soon as they became rich  
 “ robbed one another.” Dr. Johnson.

I mean not to give you a mere speculative dissertation on government, for every one must see how these principles apply to our nation at this time. There are many among us who admire the French revolution. There are many who wish to introduce the same disorder among ourselves; but be not deceived—the French began by getting rid of the *fear of GOD*, and then it is very certain they will not long *honour the King*. Where there is no principle, there will be no true courage: cowards delight in cruelty and insult. The infidel writings of their philosophers have undermined the King’s throne, and struck a blow at all religion. If we would live in confusion and dismay, and die in doubt, in violence and rage, we have only to follow their sad example\*. The factious leaders of that distracted nation have manifested a rooted enmity to the gospel of Christ, while they admire, honour and deify the poor corruptible remains of him, whose life was as impious and immoral, as his philosophy was false†. They despise, insult and contemn, the character and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, *who is GOD over all, blessed for evermore.*

\* See the death of Mirabeau.

† “ The remonstrances against Voltaire’s deification were  
 “ very strong on the side of all serious men, and well wish-  
 “ ers to good manners and uncorrupt integrity; but the  
 “ people must be amused.” Letters from Paris in 1791.  
 Let. xviii.



*Thus saith the Lord. Hath a nation changed their gods, which were yet no gods; but my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn unto themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water—but shall not I visit for these things saith the Lord? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? I will punish them with their own works, and let them follow their own imaginations, for they that honour Me I will honour; and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.*

Is this then a revolution to be applauded? Are these *principles* to be adopted? Are these *examples* to be followed?

Surely they are like to nothing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath: the models of such republicks are only to be found in the discord, the division, rage, and the confusion of hell; where all are too mad to govern, and all are too proud to submit.

The spirit of discontent which is gone forth among some of us, is a restless demon. *It is ever going through dry places seeking rest and finding none.* It can overlook a multitude of great blessings, whilst it fixes it's attention on some real or imaginary grievance of but little moment.

Let us consider the blessings which we have and be thankful; for we can justly boast of a good government; of a mild and merciful king; of just and equitable laws; of a rich and extensive commerce; of various foreign possessions; of the free exercise of our religion; of wise and liberal toleration to all who differ from us. Yet with some discontented spirits *all this awaileth them nothing*, whilst they want something more.



Now it is a little matter to me whether I govern myself, if I be but well governed. Very few can enjoy the distinguished favours of government, whilst all may enjoy peace and protection. Some few may be ennobled, but their titles and dignities do not take from the comfort and security of others; unless they are resolved to envy, what they cannot obtain; and to degrade others, because they cannot exalt themselves. Such disordered spirits, will always find subjects of complaint and of misery.

Peace, safety, and security, are great blessings, and such that a wise man will not trifle away—Popular commotions are like destructive fires; we know where they begin, but we cannot tell where they may end, and what mischief they may do. *Meddle not then with them who are given to change; remove not the antient landmarks of order and wisdom.*

But let your MODERATION be known unto all men—Be moderate in your expences and your manner of life, and you will be enabled easily to pay your taxes—Be moderate in your expectations of earthly comforts; and you will not be disappointed—Be moderate and temperate in eating and drinking, and your body will be kept in due subjection to your better part—Be moderate in your sleep, and you will find leisure enough to provide for all the wants of this life; and to prepare for all the blessings of the next.—Be moderate and mild in your families; and domestic peace, confidence and harmony will be the blessed return and your rich reward. *Bear with one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ*—Be moderate in your complaints,

for complaining can do no good—*Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: rather suffer wrong in yourselves, than commit injuries on others.*

Still the complaint returns, we want a REFORMATION. Here I will join issue, and say we *do want a REFORMATION*: but where?—in the church?—the state?—the constitution? nay—but we want a REFORMATION in ourselves; in our own lives, affections and conversations. We want more of the Christian tempers; more sobriety of mind; more resignation to the divine will; more contentment in ourselves; more integrity in business; more veracity in conversation; more honour and affectionate regards in the conjugal life; more peace, confidence and friendship among men.

These are real wants, but they are wants which every man has it in his power to redress.

On account of these things *the land mourneth: the foundations are out of course; distress and anguish are coming upon us.*

Let us then every one seriously amend what is amiss in ourselves, for *it may be a lengthening of our tranquility*; or we may be certain that our punishment, as a nation, is not far off. Let us turn to our GOD and Saviour who is *slow to wrath, and of great kindness*—Be it our first care, to live as the willing subjects of the Prince of peace. Let us put away all bitterness, wrath, clamour, evil-speaking, malice, envy and complaining from ourselves, that we may live peaceably with all men—*recompence to no man evil for evil; but render unto all their dues, tribute to*

*whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.*

*Fear GOD—and honour the king.*

## APPENDIX.

IN addition to what has been said about patriarchal, regal and republican governments, [p. 89.] it may justly be remarked that all the possible *modes* of conducting government are three, reason, influence and force.

*Reason* invariably aims at the highest good and every inferior consideration is as it were absorbed in this; but then it must be observed that a government conducted by pure reason requires subjects equally pure. It did exist in the garden of Paradise, in the golden age of the world, but it soon became obscured by ignorance, and weakened, by contending passions.

2. This would introduce a government by *influence*. In which the wayward wills and the perverse inclinations of men should be placed to counterbalance each other, and yet be made subservient to the public good: in which self-interest should call forth energy; and the fear of punishment, if not the love of virtue, should hinder crimes. All mixed governments are founded on a principle of jealousy; but it is a jealousy which is wisely concealed, while the jarring passions and opposite interests of men are yet made subservient to the general weal.

3. But a government by *force*, or the will of the strongest, is tyranny under whatever form it exists; whether it be the monarchy of Abyf-



finia or the republic of France. It is the iron rod of power always exalted to silence every complaint and to confound virtue and vice. It is the happiness of all sacrificed to the will of one. If a semblance of justice is to be given to the acts of oppression, it is to be obtained by the basest treachery and the falsest accusations. In such governments, poverty and obscurity are the only protections; the envied wealth or the more envied power of a subject mark him for destruction. These are crimes which never can be pardoned. In such governments there is no regard to the public welfare, for that is made the last consideration.

When subjects become slaves, then governors will be tyrants. Men enslave themselves to their lusts, their passions, and their false principles, before they become slaves to each other; but thus prepared, they are ready to bow the neck, and to kiss the rod which degrades them.

Preserve mental liberty, and you need not fear corporeal slavery.

When men degrade themselves by vice, they cannot be directed by *reason* or managed by *influence*, but they must be ruled by *force*. Fear is the strongest passion in slaves.

The system of modern *equality* agrees with the conduct of the Ephesians towards *Hermodorus*, whose superior merit so offended his fellow citizens that they banished him, and made him the following decree. "Let no person among us excel the rest; if such an one can be found, let him depart and dwell elsewhere." This was one method of levelling, and preserving equality.

THE END.

